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OCI No. 1552/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
17 May 1963

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Chinese Nationalist Irregulars in the
Thai-Laotian-Burmese Border Area

1. The Nationalist irregulars are remnants of the troops who retreated from southern China into Burma before the advancing Chinese Communists in 1949. In mid-1951 these forces, which then numbered about 11,000, were rearmed from Taiwan and tried unsuccessfully to invade Yunnan Province. After vigorous protests by the Burmese Government in the United Nations General Assembly, Taipei agreed to evacuate the irregulars to Taiwan. With assistance from the United States and Thailand, some 7,000 were flown out between November 1953 and May 1954, leaving behind approximately 5,000--part in Burma and part in Thailand--who refused evacuation.

2. Taipei again took an interest in the irregulars after the Taiwan Strait crisis in the fall of 1958, and began to supply arms, ammunition, and special forces cadre [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Nationalists [REDACTED] built two airfields on Burmese territory for resupplying the irregular forces and also airdropped supplies to them. In 1959 the irregulars enlisted the temporary support of 3,500 dissident Burmese tribesmen--Karens and Shans--and joined them in harassing Burmese security forces. Early in 1960 the Nationalists sent about 1,000 more Taiwanese-trained special forces troops to serve as a cadre and to reorganize the irregular forces into more effective fighting units for future commitment against mainland China.

3. In November 1960 Chinese Communist troops, perhaps collaborating with Burmese forces, attacked and seized Chinese Nationalist outposts in Burma. Nationalist bands had been hampering the work of

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joint Sino-Burmese boundary demarcation teams, and the Burmese [REDACTED] gave the Chinese Communist security forces permission to go as far as six miles inside Burma in pursuit of the Nationalists. Taipei claimed that 1,700 Communist troops penetrated as deep as 13 miles into Burma. The Nationalists [REDACTED] fled without resisting.

4. In the spring of 1961 Taiwan acceded to Burmese and US requests to evacuate the irregulars. Some 3,400 soldiers--including 1,000 special forces troops--and their dependents were flown out to Taiwan. Many of the irregulars, however, refused Taipei's orders to evacuate because they had married local women and established roots in the area. The opium trade in the border area provided them with a good income.

5. Between 3,000 and 5,000 irregulars are believed to remain in the border area today. They are divided into several independent groups, and the Chinese element has been supplemented by recruits from local tribes.

6. Since the 1961 evacuation, the remaining irregulars have continued to conduct raids on villages, harass security troops, and in general, to be a problem for the Burmese, Thai, and Lao governments. Their presence in Laos has invited charges from the Communists that they were supporting the right-wing Laotian faction. Last week the Thai Government expressed opposition to permanent settlement of the irregulars and indicated that Thailand might join Burma in an effort to suppress them.

